A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ENGLISH NATION.

Tuesday, June 25. 1706.

I Never lov'd to tell a Story twice, both because I would not tyre my Readers, nor my self—But as my Observations upon the *Play-house* coming in by way of Collection for the Use of the *Church*, have made some noise in the World, and being very unwilling to go on in any thing I cannot justifie, I thought I could make no better Satisfaction to those Gentlemen that may think they have any Share in the Story, than to give one Turn more to it; being always ready to make Acknowledgments, where I find any Cause for it.

Since therefore, the World has been pleas'd to mob my last *Review* upon this Subject about Streets, under the Title of *my Sermon*, they may call this my Recantation Sermon, if they please, or any thing else, it is all one.

In short, I do find a most unjust Reflection is rais'd upon some Gentlemen by the Consequence of this matter, who, for ought I see, are wholly innocent; and that is upon the honest Inhabitants of the large Parish of St. *Martins in the Fields*; as if they either were not able, or which is worse, not willing to contribute to the re-edifying an old *Meeting-house*, and make a *Church* of it.

And to clear them of this Scandal, another unhappy Truth, they say, is a coming to light, *viz.* That a general Collection for this purpose was made, that her Majesty was pleas'd to give 100 *l.* towards it, and that the Reverend Dr. *L———r* told the People so for their Encouragement; and that after this, the Reverend Mr. *Y—s* Curate of St. *Martins*, went about from House

House to House for the voluntary Gifts of the People; and that several Gentlemen of Quality, not excluding the devout Women, contributed largely to the Work; and how it should come, that all this should not be sufficient to pay 650 *l.* which we are inform'd is the utmost Charge of the thing, is very hard to conclude, and what no body enclines to believe.

It being then more than probable, that Money enough was collected or easily might be for this Affair, the Inhabitants of the Parish must needs stand clear of the Reproach, of thus setting the *Church* to raise Contributions upon the *Play-house*.

But in pursuing this, the Author hopes, no body would be so unkind to him to draw him into a snare; as if this Paper was a design upon the Gentlemen that collected the Money, to examine how they have dispos'd of it—No, no, Gentlemen, I make no doubt, but you have apply'd the Money; —*Apply'd the Money*! Says one, what a malicious Insinuation's that, what does this Fellow mean, will he make Thieves of us? No, no, Gentlemen, not Thieves, only *Church-wardens!* I hope, there's nothing synonymous in the Expression—I hope you are all very honest, and that the Parish will take care to keep you so.

As to the Parish therefore, I desire to be understood, to clear them entirely, and am verily perswaded, that they either did contribute sufficient for this work, or would have made good the Deficiency upon a fresh Application—And I cannot but think, now I have done them so much voluntary Justice, they ought in the next place to do themselves so much Justice, as to let us know, who these *Church-Hussars* were, that went a *free booting* upon the poor *Play-house*.

It is not fair, they say, *to laugh twice at one Jest*—But who can help it? to see the *Play house* levy Money for the *Church*! pray let us examine the Circumstances a little, and see whether this is not really a Banter upon the *Play house* too; that they should pretend to contribute to the Necessities of the *Church*, that cannot keep their own Edifices in Repair.

Again, if the *Play-house* is so addicted to Acts of Charity, why do they not maintain their own poor? why not raise a Pension for the poor Brethren at the *Hay-market*? or which would be something to their Honour, make good the Subscriptions that are yet unpaid, and discharge the Debt to the poor Workmen that built the House?

Thus *Play-house* Charity is set with the bottom upward; like a famous dignified Gentleman in *England*, who ran in Debt to honest Men to give Alms to Knaves —Perhaps it may be said, the Actors are not a Corporation, and have nothing to do with one another; unless it be to help starve one another—Well, but Gentlemen, tho' you are not a Corporation, you are a Fraternity, and as the Devil's Broker said to Dr. *Griffith*, you are all of a Trade, you are all the Devil's Brokers, and you ought in common Prudence, and to support the Honour of the Employment, to have releiv'd your Brethren first, and have clear'd our Prisons of some of the best of them.

Besides, I am at a Loss for the Connexion of the thing; where's the Coherence here, the *Play-house*, and the *Church*! bless us all, there's no manner of Philosophy in it; 'tis *Yoking* the *Poles*, 'tis a Wedding between *two Antipodes*, 'tis *Azure* upon *Blue*, 'tis *North* and by *South*, 'tis saying the *Christ-Cross-Row* backward—And no body can tell whether it be to raise the Devil, or to lay him; There could not have been such a Circle *full of Angles* put together again, and all the Men of Wit, either in GOD's Church or the Devil's Chappel, could not have composed such another Piece of Discord; no body knows what to make on't, nor what to say for it.

Some People have been rumageing their Heads for the Design of it; for they say, there must be something extraordinary intended—Now *tho' 'tis true*, sometimes as wonderful things as these are brought to pass, when a Complication of Follies meet together, without the Agency of the least Meaning, *as* Epicurus's *fortuitous Atoms*, *which they say, form'd the World*; and so this great Affair may be laudably suppos'd to have jump'd into the World—yet I can see no need for so wild a Guess: He that shot this Gun, took Aim no doubt; and what did he aim at think you? Why THE MONEY, Man! what should he aim at? and whoever he was, whether *Actor*, or

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Church-warden, or a *Rump of both*, form'd into a *Junto* for this weighty Affair; my Life for yours, THE MONEY was the Matter!

The Player, I allow, had the beſt Proſpect of the two; for without doubt he had a clear Thought; As firſt, a *full Houſe*, that's an united Benefit. 2. A Snack with the Club, there's private Intereſt, a new Reputation for Loyalty to the Church, ſecuring a Friend in time of need, and a Skreen from Juſtice; becauſe one good Turn deſerves another.

But what ſhall we ſay to Mr. *Church-warden*? he muſt be a rare Fellow that can bring him off; he muſt certainly be ſome *Phanatick*, or ſome very *low*, *low*, *low Church-Man*, that contriv'd this thing to expoſe the *Church*, and pretend to bring her into a Confederacy with Hell, to ſupport her dying *High-Church* Cauſe.

Again, ſome ſay, this is a *Low-Church* Plot upon the *High-Church Play-houſe*, and a pretty Banter this makes indeed; for the *Hay-market* Building, they ſay, is a *Low-Church Play-houſe*, and *Drury-Lane*, they ſay, is a *High Church Play-Houſe*.

Two things are concluded from hence. 1. That the High Gentlemen are the beſt Friends to the Church of *England*; for when did ever the *Low Church* Players offer to give the *Church* a Day at the *Houſe*?—'Tis really very kindly done, and their Care of the *Church* is very remarkable, and merits to be recorded.

2. It neceſſarily follows, that the *Church* is very much beholden to the *Play-houſe*, that they will give away their Profits to its Aſſiſtance.

It remains here to make a brief Enquiry of this matter, *viz.* If the *Play-houſe*, upon a happy Concourſe, ſhould raiſe a Sum conſiderable enough to pay this Charge, *which by the way ſome People ſay is paid already*, and have a Sum left, to whom muſt that Sum go? 'tis plain, 'tis given to diſcharge the Repairs, to employ it to any other purpoſe, would be to wrong the Donor, and be a kind of Sacriledge—But if I may give my Opinion, it ſhould be apply'd to pull down the *Play-houſe*, and I undertake to prove, that this is imploying the Money to the true Uſe deſign'd by the Donors.

'Tis plain, this Money is not given for ſeeing a Play; for then, if Mr.——— ſhould chance to preach, they might as well have gone to *Church*—But the Money is given on the Conſideration of building and repairing the *Church*—Now, if I may be allow'd to ſpeak figuratively, I know nothing can contribute more to the building, repairing, and adorning the *Church* of *England*, than pulling down the *Play-houſes*.

We talk of reforming our Manners, and ſetting up Rules of Government; But to attempt it this way, ſeems to me to make a Comedy of the Government, and a Tragedy of the *Church*; how odd a Sight would it be to ſee this Farce acted upon our Stage! and how ſtrange would it be to ſee Bills put up thus,

At the Theatre Royal in *Drury Lane*, this preſent *Thurſday* being the 27*th* of *June*, will be acted a new Play Entitled, THE CHURCH; a Tragedy.

This I think is certain, let the Play be what it will; let it be *Farce*, *Comedy*, *Opera*, or any thing, 'tis a Tragedy to the *Church*—and one of the ſhorteſt ways to pull her down, when the People ſhall once be prevail'd upon to think their going to the Play, joyn'd to their Duty to God.

What horrid work is here made of Religion, the ſacred Maſk has been a Diſguiſe to many Hypocrites, but never was put upon the Face of the *Play-houſe* before—I cannot deny it to be a very quaint Invention to perſwade People, and a cunning Turn to fill the *Houſe*; that they might go to the Play for God-ſake—Our Children would now have a fair Excuſe to us, when we refuſe them leave to go to the Play—Why, Sir, 'tis for the Benefit of the *Church* I do it, for my Money is to be given to build up the *Church*—Excellent Excuſe, Child! Should I ſay—So you muſt go lay out your Money with the Devil, that he may build God-Allmighty a Houſe with it—Sacrifize to Vanity for the Encouragement of Piety. Rare Work indeed!

To conclude this melancholy Jeſt; for if we were to talk ſeriouſly of it, the Reflection would be ſad enough; if the Concourſe to the Play is ſo great, that they can afford every now and then to give a

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